



European Foundation
for the Improvement
of Living and Working
Conditions

The tripartite EU Agency providing knowledge
to assist in the development of better social,
employment and work-related policies

Platform work: Opportunities and challenges

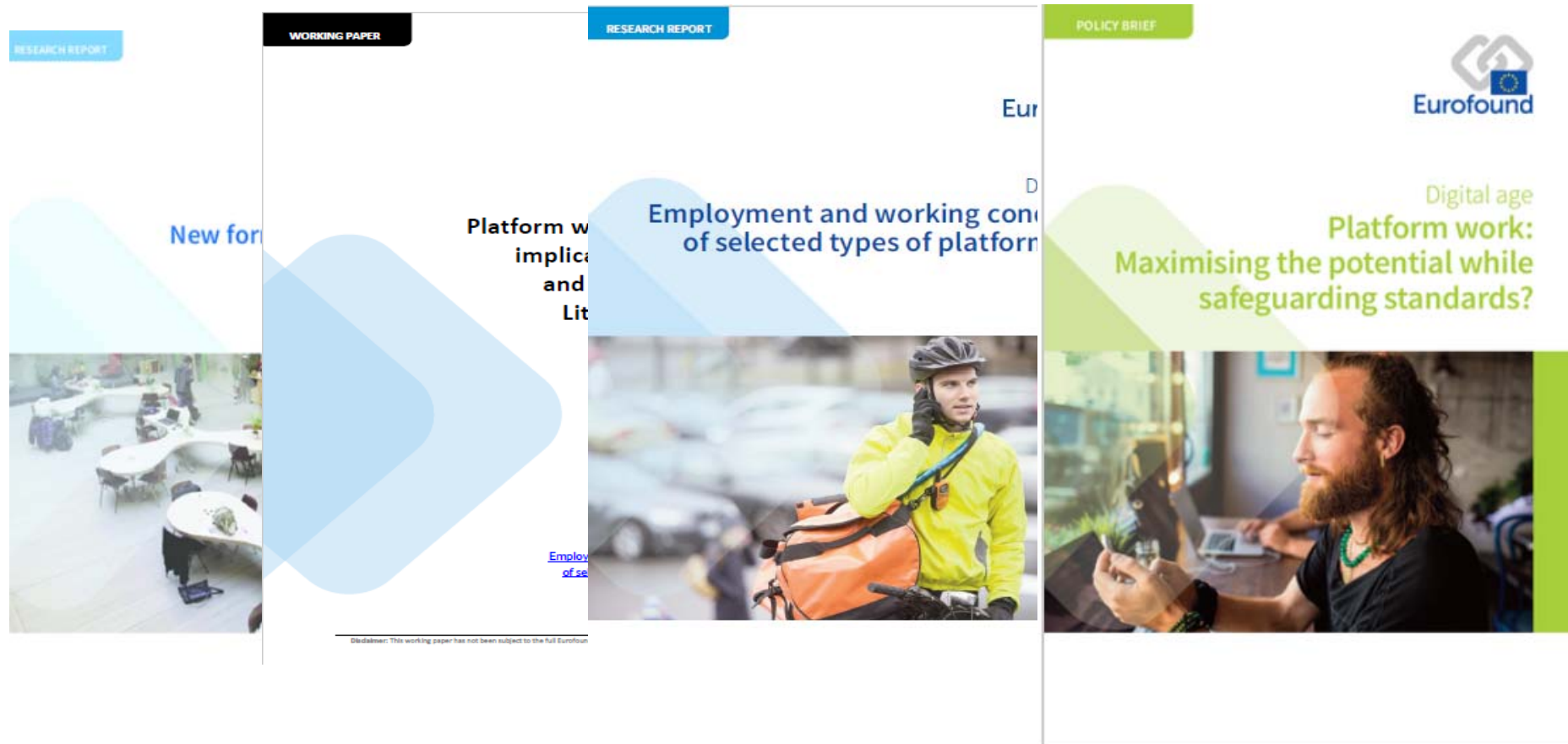
ETUI Monthly Forum

'What do we know about platform work?'

Irene Mandl

Brussels, 18 February 2020

Eurofound's research on platform work: Focus on employment and working conditions

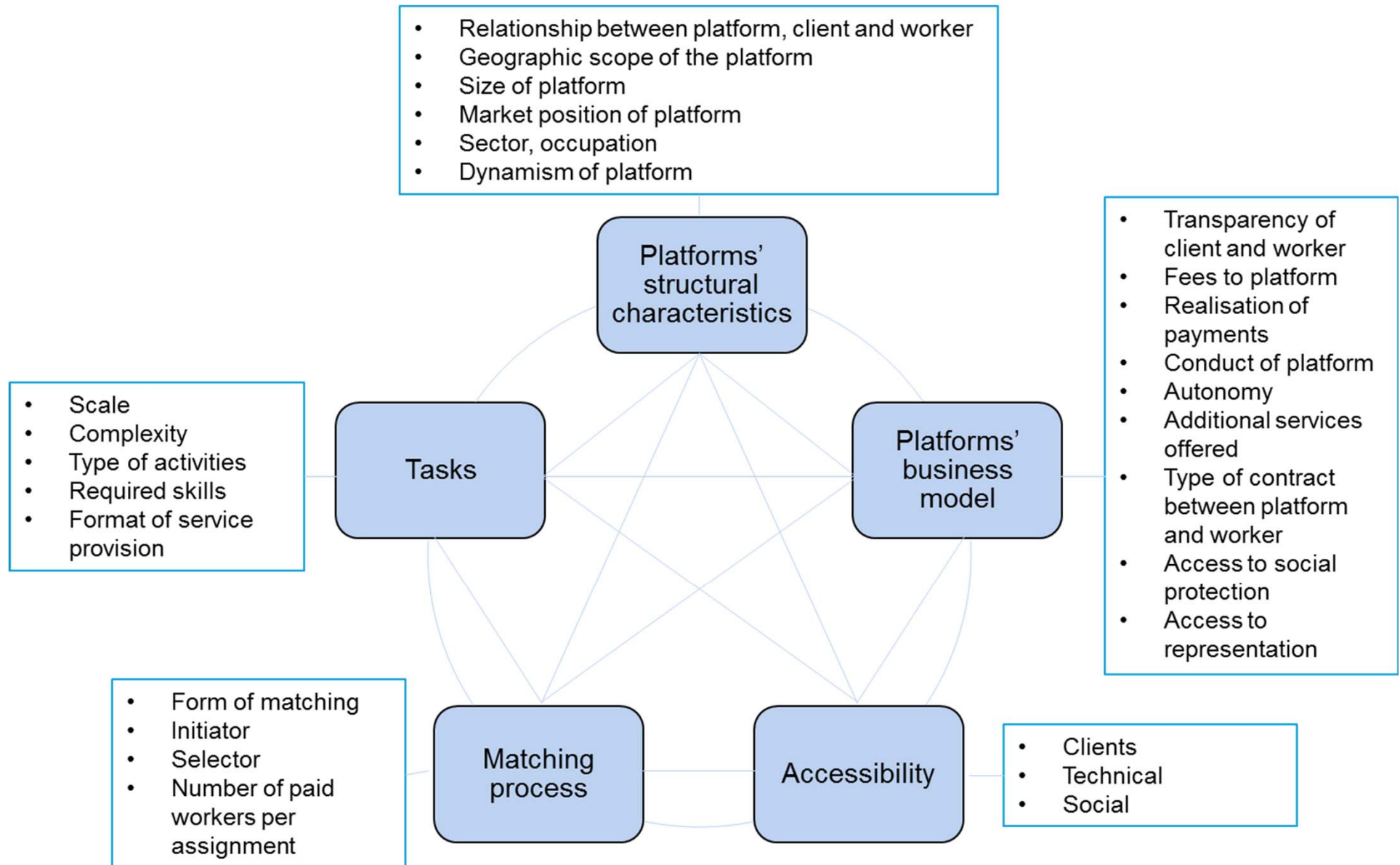


<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2015/working-conditions-labour-market/new-forms-of-employment>

<http://eurofound.link/ef18001>

<http://eurofound.link/ef19045>

Eurofound's theoretical typology of platform work



Types of platform work in Europe

Scale of tasks

Skills level required

Format of service provision

Form of matching

Selector

**Eurofound
identified
10 common types
of platform work**

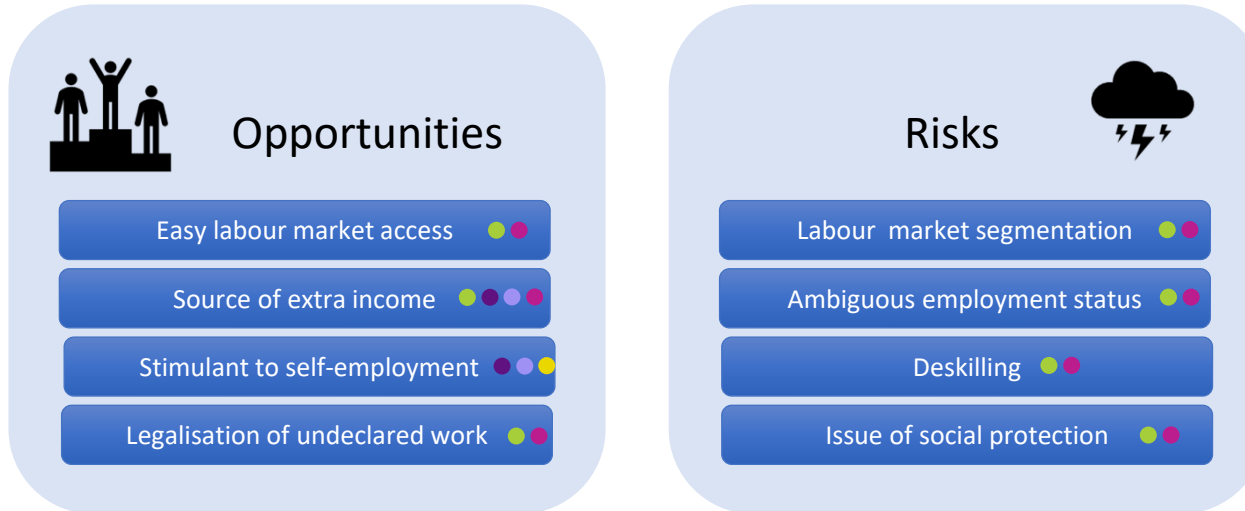
Focus on selected types of platform work

- On-location platform-determined routine work
- On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work
- Online contestant specialist work
- On-location client-determined moderately skilled work
- Online moderately skilled click work

Overview: selected types of platform work

	On-location platform-determined	Online click-work	On-location worker-initiated	On-location client-determined	Online contestants
Tasks	Transport	Data, info	Household		Creative tasks
Gender	Male	Balanced	Male		
Age, family	Young		Slightly older, children		Young
Education	Highly educated				
Labour market status	Student	Precarious	Employee or self-employed		Self-employed or freelancer
Motivation	Low entry barriers	Lack of employment alternatives	Build or extend client base	Earn additional income	Fun, use creativity and ideas

Impact: Labour market



- On-location platform-determined routine work
- On-location client-determined moderately skilled work
- On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work
- Online moderately skilled click-work
- Online contestant specialist work

Impact: Working conditions



Opportunities

Objective work assignment ●●

Working time flexibility ●●●

Decent pay rates ●●●

Predictability of earnings ●

- On-location platform-determined routine work
- On-location client-determined moderately skilled work
- On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work
- Online moderately skilled click-work
- Online contestant specialist work

Risks



Lack of autonomy ●●

Limitations of client rating ●●●

Short notice ●●

High work intensity ●●

Poor career prospects in the platform economy ●●●●

Below-market pay rates ●●

Unpaid working time ●●

Unpredictability of earnings ●●

Unclear health & safety responsibility ●

Policy pointers - General

- **Explore the opportunities of platform work and use it strategically**
 - Labour market integration
 - Extending working life
 - Legalise undeclared work
 - Promote self-employment
 - Raise household incomes
 - **But: Consider potential unintended side effects, e.g.**
 - Labour market segmentation
 - Crowding out
 - **Differentiated discussion and solutions instead of ‘one-size-fits-all’**
-

Policy pointers – Specific aspects (1)

- **Employment status, rights and entitlements**



- **Algorithms, ratings**
 - Transparency
 - Fairness and access to redress
 - Portability

Policy pointers – Specific aspects (2)

- **Pay**
 - Ensuring decent pay rates, notably for online and low-qualified tasks
 - Ensuring predictability of income, notably for online tasks
 - Tackling unpaid working time
- **Health and safety**
 - Clarifying responsibilities
 - Addressing business models and mechanisms
 - Awareness raising and information provision
- **Private individuals or households as clients**
- **Representation**

- **Aspects beyond work and employment**

Other Eurofound activities on platform work – Web repository

The screenshot shows the Eurofound website's 'Platform economy repository' page. At the top, the Eurofound logo and mission statement are visible, along with a search bar and language selection options. A navigation menu includes links for About us, Publications, Topics, Data and resources, Surveys, Countries, Observatories, News, and Events. The breadcrumb trail indicates the current location: Home > Data and resources > Platform economy repository. The main content area features a sidebar with a 'Platform economy repository' menu containing links for About, Dossiers, Typology, Database, and Initiatives. The main text is titled 'Platform economy repository' and dated 06 September 2018. It provides a definition of platform work and discusses its growth and challenges. A 'Related content' section lists 'Digital age' and 'New forms of employment' as topics. A call-to-action box encourages users to subscribe for monthly updates. A 'Forthcoming publication' section highlights a report on 'Employment and working conditions of selected types of platform work'.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

The tripartite EU agency providing knowledge to assist in the development of better social, employment and work-related policies

ENGLISH

Home > Data and resources > Platform economy repository

Platform economy repository

06 September 2018

Platforms are digital networks that coordinate transactions, both commercial, such as the provision of goods and services for payment, and non-commercial, such as volunteering activities or social media. The activity of platforms collectively is typically referred to as the platform economy. This economy began to emerge in Europe in the mid-2000s, driven by technological, economic and societal developments and is rapidly expanding in scale and scope. Out of it has emerged a new form of employment – platform work, defined as the matching of supply and demand for paid labour through an online platform.

Platform work is expected to grow, but there is widespread concern about the quality of work and employment of the workers involved in it. Platform work is also clearly challenging existing regulatory and institutional frameworks, and its effects on the economy and society are uncertain. These issues have made platform work the subject of intensive discussion among policymakers and academics, who are exploring the characteristics of the platform economy, its potential effects and how to tackle the negative consequences it may have. Their work is generating a wealth of information, but it is challenging to stay abreast of research findings and initiatives.

Eurofound's online repository aims to provide a solution by making information on the platform economy and platform work in Europe and beyond accessible in a user-friendly way. The different types of documents are organised into separate sections, and users can browse through the sections or use the search function to look for specific information. Users can also set up subscriptions and alerts to be notified about new publications on specific topics.

Subscribe and receive monthly updates from Eurofound's Platform economy repository

Forthcoming publication

Employment and working conditions of selected types of platform work

This report provides an overview of online platforms matching supply and demand for paid work, looking at different platforms and activities, working conditions, legal developments, and trends.

<http://eurofound.link/platformeconomy>

Other Eurofound activities on platform work – Mapping measurements

WORKING PAPER



Digital age
**Mapping the contours of the
platform economy**

[Automation, digitisation and platforms:
implications for work and employment](#)

Disclaimer: This working paper has not been subject to the full Eurofound evaluation, editorial and publication process.

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wpef19060.pdf>

How is the platform economy measured?



- Mostly online
- General population vs. platform workers
- Mostly one-offs with relatively small samples, not always probability sampling
- Potential response errors



- Big data
- Web scraping and web crawling



- Administrative/registry data
- Platform data

Main identified challenges

- Lack of an agreed international term and definition/demarcation
- Applicability of established concepts (e.g. sector, employment status)
- Potential international and fragmented nature of platform work
- Dynamics within platform work (e.g. business models, 'fluidity' of work)
- Heterogeneity within platform work limits extrapolation options
- Ethical concerns

Platform work in Eurofound's surveys (1)



- Survey of (HR) managers (about 21,000) and employee representatives (about 3,000) in EU establishments
- Coverage of e.g. work organisation, HR policies, employee participation, social dialogue, skills strategies and utilisation, digitalisation, outcomes
- ECS 2019 jointly conducted by Cedefop and Eurofound
- Push-to-web approach

➤ Attempt to cover the 'client's perspective' (work organisation/externalisation)

'Does your establishment use online platforms (such as [country specific examples]) to commission work or tasks to external staff?'

- Result of the cognitive testing: 'Very problematic'
 - Examples were unfamiliar
 - 'Online platform', 'commissioning work/tasks', 'external staff' was not well understood and interpreted in a variety of ways
- Decision to drop the question

Platform work in Eurofound's surveys (2)



- Survey of more than 40,000 workers in about 35 European countries
 - Coverage of e.g. employment status, working time duration and organisation, work organisation, learning and training, physical and psychosocial risk factors, H&S, work-life balance, worker participation, earnings and financial security
 - Face-to-face interviews
 - EWCS 2020 fieldwork started in January
- Some background considerations
- General context of increasing multi-activity and fragmentation of jobs
 - General context of increasingly blurring boundaries between employee and self-employed
 - Indications for a 'platformisation of standard work'
 - Understanding of 'work'
- Attempt to – indirectly – cover the 'worker's perspective' (employment form, work organisation), e.g.
- Clarification that involvement in the platform economy qualifies as 'job' (question on 'more than one job')
 - Question on task allocation in an automated way
 - Question on formal assessment of work by customers or suppliers and impact (e.g. further work allocation, level of pay)



European Foundation
for the Improvement
of Living and Working
Conditions

The tripartite EU Agency providing knowledge
to assist in the development of better social,
employment and work-related policies

Thank you for your attention!

eurofound.link/digitalage

Irene.Mandl@eurofound.europa.eu